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Hospitality in the Manner of St. Vincent de Paul

J. PATRICK MURPHY, C.M., PH.D.

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As Very Dear Friends: The Inestimable, Hospitable Vincent de Paul¹

- Are you feeling down? Vincent was depressed for three-and-a-half years.
- Are you a little tired? Vincent lived nearly 80 years, dying in 1660—died working. When asked on his deathbed what would he have done differently with his life, his single dying word was “more.”
- Are you disappointed with our sorry world? Vincent spent his entire life in a time of war, except for his final three months.

Vincent wrote the Common Rules for members of the Congregation of the Mission, and he taught them how to live:

Love, like that between brothers, should always be present among us.... For this reason there should be great mutual respect, and we should get along *as good friends*....²

These are the words that anchor his action of hospitality. Members of the Congregation of the Mission call each other confreres—a French word that means brothers-with. It is, perhaps, the root word of all of Vincent’s relationships.

What do Howard Schultz of Starbucks, Steve Jobs of Apple, Walt Disney, and Bill Marriott, Jr., have in common with Vincent de Paul? They demanded excellence in serving their customers, ridiculously defining standards and exhorting their people to exceed expectations, taking swift action and striving constantly for improvement. Did Howard, Steve, Walt, and Bill learn it from Vincent? They could have. Our job today is sense-making, both in terms of how Vincent made sense of his life and his world, and how we make sense of Vincent today. How do we discover Vincent’s theory and practice of hospitality in the seventeenth century and make sense of it in the twenty-first? Vincent was born in 1581, ordained at the age of nineteen, earned his bachelor degree in theology shortly thereafter, and was licensed in both canon and civil law too.

Karl Weick, the “father of sensemaking,” suggests that the term means simply “the making of sense.”³ It is the process of structuring the unknown. “....People use strategy ... in such a way as to give meaning, purpose and direction to the organization.”⁴ Leaders, he asserts, perform their main purpose in making sense of things for organizational members. In researching this topic I found that Vincent’s hospitality can be identified in five core practices: mission, passion, make friends, listen to your heart, and active hospitality. Let’s take them one at a time, and follow up with hospitality lessons for servant leaders.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at *Servant Leadership: A Conference on How to Get Great Things Done in Organizations*, All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland, 27 June 2014.

² Vincent de Paul, *The Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission*, VIII, Number 2 (Rome; Philadelphia: General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission, 1989), 129. Emphasis added.

³ Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Mission

Nearly everyone agrees that mission is central to nonprofit organizations, nothing is more important. What is the purpose of the organization and how will it make a difference? Vincent saw mission as the first principle of management.⁵ Indeed, he suffered through depression for three-and-a-half years and was only able to break out of it when he made sense of his life and found his mission at Châtillon. Vincent presents the purpose, his passion:

Come then, my dear confreres, let's devote ourselves with renewed love to serve persons who are poor, and even to seek out those who are the poorest and most abandoned; let's acknowledge before God that they're our lords and masters and that we're unworthy of rendering them our little services.⁶

Bill Marriott explains the mission, and how it is rooted, in detail.

Marriott's principal product is probably not what you think it is. Yes, we're in the lodging business. Yes, we sell room nights. But what we're really selling is our expertise in *managing the processes*—especially how we welcome our guests at check-in—that make those room sales possible. And that expertise rests firmly on our mastery of hundreds of tiny operational details.⁷

We are sometimes teased about our passion for the Marriott “way” of doing things. We're known in the hotel industry for our detailed procedures. The aim is to provide our customers with service free of hassles and surprises.⁸

Food must be at the proper temperature and well presented. Attention to detail is everything. The responsibility for taking care of the guest is the cardinal rule.⁹

At Starbucks Howard Schultz is mad about brewing the perfect cup of coffee and serving it with aplomb. With over 18,000 stores, Starbucks averages sixteen visits per month per customer. They estimate that they keep a customer for twenty years. Their stock is up 392% in the last decade.¹⁰

⁵ Thomas Fuechtmann, “‘There is Great Charity But...’ Vincent de Paul and the Organization of Charity” in *Vincentian Heritage* 23-25:2 (2005), 51.

⁶ Conference 164, “Love for the Poor,” January 1657, in *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 11:349. Hereafter CCD. See: http://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/

⁷ J.W. Marriott, Jr., *Without Reservations How a Family Root Beer Stand Grew into a Global Hotel Company* (San Diego: Luxury Custom Publishing, LLC, 2012), 68.

⁸ Marriott, *Without Reservations*, 65.

⁹ Ed Fuller, *You Can't Lead with Your Feet on the Desk: Building Relationships, Breaking Down Barriers, and Delivering Profits* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 34.

¹⁰ Paul Tracy, “How the ‘Starbucks Effect’ Could Lead to 200% Gains,” Nasdaq.com, 22 February 2013: <http://www.nasdaq.com/article/how-the-starbucks-effect-could-lead-to-200-gains-cm220445>



Daughters of Charity caring for the sick. Engraving.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



In his Rule, Vincent did not hesitate to go into details on the manner in which the servants of the poor should work with the sick. “The lady who is on duty will bring the dinner and carry it to the sick. In approaching them, she will greet them cheerfully and with kindness.”¹¹ And Vincent went further with his recommendations, specifying the order in which the sick should be served: “One must remember to serve first those who have someone with them and finish with those who are alone, so that one can spend a longer time with them.”¹² Finally, a famous detail Vincent offered for serving the poor was “...when you serve the poor, put out a white table cloth....”¹³

What is significant for us here is the process of self-evaluation. Vincent was never satisfied that the work was the best it could be. He constantly examined it in the light of “experience” and sought to improve it. Just nine days before his death, he was still doing so.¹⁴

Passion

Modern researchers refer to Vincent’s life as “Vincent I” and “Vincent II.” Early in life he sought comfort and the financial resources to be independent and provide for his family. Vincent did not become a leader until the conditions of the poor grabbed hold of his conscience and would not let him go. Organizing a response to poverty became his passion. “After so many travels and shifts, with his goal finally attained, Vincent began to realize the emptiness of everything that he had wished so ardently to grasp: material ease,

¹¹ Bernard Pujo, *Vincent de Paul: The Trailblazer* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 72.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ John E. Rybolt, C.M., “The Story of the White Tablecloth,” DePaul University Office of Mission and Values Video Series, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CgJVAC7Na8>

¹⁴ Louise Sullivan, D.C., *The Core Values of Vincentian Education* (Niagara, N.Y.: Niagara University, 1997), 28.

important titles, the company of the powerful. It was his work with the rural poor that brought him a sense of his own accomplishment.”¹⁵ He spent 25 years trying to control God and then, freed from his own rat race, embraced the poor.

The Wright brothers knew that their plane would fly one day, they just didn’t know which day it would be. Their passion for flying catapulted them out of bed each morning eager for the sun to rise to see if this would be the day. Or, as Wilbur said, “We could hardly wait to get up in the morning.”

A story by Bob Janis from DePaul University also illustrates such passion:

Let’s see... it is 4:00 pm on Sunday, any Sunday, so that means only 12 more hours before I get up and go to work again! This is not some dire sentiment. It is a sentiment of excitement and anticipation of a new workweek about to begin. It is a fresh chance to spend more time doing what I love to do—serve the DePaul community. Since the day I started, nearly 36 years ago, I experience this Sunday rush of anticipation and excitement of the week to come.¹⁶

The best leaders are the most passionate about their work, their organizations, and their disciplines. The most highly rated teachers are those who are most enthusiastic about their material.¹⁷

Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, which he sold to Amazon for two billion dollars, said:

I made a list of the happiest periods in my life, and I realized that none of them involved money. I realized that building stuff and being creative and inventive made me happy. Connecting with a friend and talking through the entire night until the sun rose made me happy. I thought about how I enjoyed creating, building, and doing stuff that I was passionate about.

I didn’t realize it at the time, but it was a turning point for me in my life. I had decided to stop chasing the money, and start chasing the passion. I was ready for the next chapter in my life.¹⁸

Hsieh established a company-wide policy at Zappos: he would offer \$25,000 to any employee who wanted to leave the company. He did not want anyone who would leave for \$25,000; he wanted passion.

¹⁵ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 56.

¹⁶ Bob Janis, “Tough as Nails,” in Jenny Mohan and Mandy Sharp, *Leading in the Legacy of St. Vincent de Paul: Reflections on Vincentian Leadership Today* (Chicago: Vincent on Leadership: The Hay Project, 2010), 54. See: http://via.library.depaul.edu/hay_books/1/

¹⁷ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (Jossey-Bass, 2012), 416 pp.

¹⁸ Tony Hsieh, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2010), 53-54.

Bill Marriott explained the passion he brings to the job:

For 60 years, I have loved my job, without reservations. While many people my age look forward to their daily round of golf or a dip in the pool, I prefer to travel halfway around the world to inspect hotels.

I'm not proud of all the hours I spent away from my family during my career, but I am proud that my passion for the work I do inspired all four of my children to follow me into the hotel business.¹⁹

Mandy Sharp, a graduate assistant in the School of Public Service at DePaul University, reflected on her passion:

She [a speaker at DePaul University] asked us simple questions: What is your college major? What is your passion? What makes you hot?

....After two years in DePaul's School of Public Service, I found my own personal mission—to do what makes me hot with a fire that acts ceaselessly—by working in international development. Vincent and Louise worked tirelessly to address the unmet needs of the poor—perhaps the fire they exuded for their work is what sustains their organizations more than 350 years after their deaths. They lived for their mission, both their personal mission to serve the poor, and for the mission of long-withstanding organizations that serve communities today.

....I realize we must live with mission, purpose and fire to do what “makes us hot,” to ignite a lasting social change....²⁰

Where is our passion? Americans chase after happiness asking “Am I happy in life?” This is the wrong question. We can torture ourselves to death with this question. The World Health Organization says the United States is the most anxious nation on earth. It is because of the “rat-race to happiness.” Rather, we can ask whether we are doing what we have to do. Does it give us life? Leadership begins with something that grabs hold and won't let go; happiness follows.²¹

In a YouTube video, John Yokoyama, owner of Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market, describes the people who work for him: “People aren't numbers. This is management by inspiration, keeping the spirit and purpose alive. We have the best results, the best relationships I have ever had. I love them; they love me.”²²

Vincent did not become a leader until the condition of the poor grabbed hold of him and would not let him go. Although once focused on personal aggrandizement, organizing a response to poverty became his passion.

¹⁹ Marriott, *Without Reservations*, 11.

²⁰ Mandy Sharp, “Do What Makes You Hot,” in Mohan and Sharp, *Leading in the Legacy*, 3-4.

²¹ Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*.

²² Irwin McGraw-Hill, “Management by Inspiration,” see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxQW5xgX8A8#t=399>



Vincent presents the Common Rules to members of the Congregation of the Mission.

From a series on the life of Vincent de Paul by Vignola.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



After pursuing wealth for years he wrote his mother to say that he thought he would have enough money in another year to retire, and that he would be able to take care of her then.²³ He was 27. “Vincent began to realize the emptiness of everything that he had wished so ardently to grasp: material ease, important titles, the company of the powerful. It was his work with the rural poor that brought him a sense of his own accomplishment.”²⁴

But how much is enough? Jesus told us to baptize the nations—all of them. Preach the good news to the poor—all of them. Vincent’s vision was to serve the poor—all of them. He did not stop at the gates of Paris or the borders of France. He sent missionaries to the ends of the earth: “Our vocation is to go not into one parish, nor into only one diocese, but throughout the earth. And to do what? To inflame the hearts of men. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbor does not love him as well.”²⁵

Make Friends

“Love, like that between brothers, should always be present among us.... For this reason there should be great mutual respect, and we should get along as good friends.”²⁶

After thirty-three years of practice, Vincent offered this rule to the men who were members of his community, those he spent his life with: love one another as good friends. Bernard Pujo notes that Vincent was gifted early in life in making friends and generally charming people, especially women. “Already then, he had the gift of winning other people’s good will, and he would keep this gift all his life. His charm, no doubt, was a subtle mix—a mischievous glance, sparkling wit, the good cheer of a Gascon, and a wellspring

²³ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

²⁶ Vincent de Paul, *Common Rules*, VIII, Number 2, 129.

of optimism that survived even the hardest luck;"²⁷ "Vincent had an innate gift for striking up relationships that usually turned into friendships;"²⁸ "Vincent had a particular gift for making connections with people."²⁹

Professor Thomas A. Maier believes hospitality is rooted in approachability. Edward Udovic, C.M., suggests that Vincent's virtue of being meek can be suitably translated to twenty-first-century culture as being "approachable." Brother Leo Keigher, C.M., has worked with the homeless at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Chicago, for over twenty years and witnesses firsthand how they befriend each other, and also become friends to him.

Bill Marriott tells the story of a family who left their son's favorite stuffed toy behind. Frantic, they called the hotel to report the loss. Marriott associates located the toy and concocted a story that the toy had extended its vacation, then photographed the toy at the pool and elsewhere. They created a basket of remembrances and mailed all to the child endearing the Marriott brand because they acted like friends to the family. Edwin Fuller of Marriott declares, "In short, relationships are the currency of every culture."³⁰

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in *Le Petit Prince*, taught us about building interdependencies as servant leaders. The Little Prince says: "'I am looking for friends. What does that mean, tame?' 'It is an act too often neglected,' said the fox. 'It means to establish ties... If you tame me, then we shall need each other.' 'You become responsible for what you have tamed.'"³¹

At Disney World when the Wilderness Lodge was built, the family restaurant, Whispering Canyon Café, was to be different. The design of the menu, space, and service focused on the children rather than the parents. Wait staff paid attention to the children and would often put parents into embarrassing positions of, for instance, riding a stick horse around the restaurant to the absolute delight of the kids. Befriending the kids as a way to the hearts of the adults makes for family entertainment par excellence.

Ron Ramson, C.M., writes that "Frédéric Ozanam viewed his involvement in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as interplay between friends for friends.... The members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul were friends helping friends."³²

Kathy Slover of the St. Vincent de Paul Center in Chicago tells the story of Kim:

Kim was a Homeless Outreach client for eight years. He came to us each Monday morning, ready for a shower and a change of clothes. He spent the rest of his week hustling money to pay for his drug and alcohol addictions.

²⁷ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁰ Fuller, *You Can't Lead with Your Feet*, 17.

³¹ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1943).

³² Ronald Ramson, C.M., *Hosanna! Blessed Frederic Ozanam: Family and Friends* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2013), 90.

Each Monday, we greeted him with a smile and asked if he wanted to talk. The Outreach Coordinator always told him he was smart, capable, and that he could handle a job and apartment if he was ready to try rehab. After five years, Kim decided he was ready to try rehab. He tried three times before becoming clean and sober. Now he is a dependable volunteer in the Homeless Outreach program. He was baptized two years ago at the age of forty-seven. He has a part-time maintenance job at his church. Kim says this is all because we treated him with respect. A smile, a shower and trust in his abilities during the eight years he was our client convinced him to try a new approach to his life.³³

Listen to your heart

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eyes.”

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

“The central ingredients of heart are your understanding of your business, and the internal compass that develops after years of experience.”³⁴

Malcom Gladwell tells the story of the town of Roseto, Pennsylvania, where the inhabitants were free of heart disease. Researchers studied diet, ancestry, and all possible reasons why this could be. Inhabitants, they found, had healthy hearts because of the common lives they lived.³⁵

Vincent spoke with an open heart, evoking the example of a man known to all in order to urge his audience to unburden their hearts of the weight of past faults. Still profoundly moved himself, he spoke to his countrymen like a man of the country; son of a peasant, he spoke to them in their language. The effect was extraordinary!³⁶

Meekness [or, approachability, as suggested by Maier and Udovic] consists of showing great affability, cordiality, and cheerfulness of countenance to those who approach us, so that we may be a consolation to them. Some, by their smile or their friendly greetings, please everyone.... These individuals seem to offer you their heart and ask yours in return.³⁷

³³ Kathy Slover, “We Must Give Them a Life Worthy of the Name,” in Mohan and Sharp, *Leading in the Legacy*, 74.

³⁴ Marriott, *Without Reservations*, 126.

³⁵ Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008), 3, 10.

³⁶ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 60.

³⁷ Serafin Peralta, C.M., *Reflections: Last Ten Years in the Life of St. Vincent de Paul* (Manila: Adamson University Press, 2009), 58.



Vincent de Paul holding a copy of the Common Rules.
Painting; original in the Vincentian motherhouse, Paris, France.
Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



Jesus then goes on to connect treasure and heart which, ultimately, is the reason why he warns against earthly treasure. He wants our hearts to be focused on the Father, not distracted by the things money can buy. It is our hearts, after all, that connect us to God.³⁸

Relationships are what we value instead of earthly treasure. This is where the real work of Jesus, Vincent, Louise, and Frederick is done. It is in relationships that hearts are changed, both our own hearts and those to whom we relate.³⁹

Divine Providence

Vincent waited thirty-three years before he wrote and promulgated the Common Rules for the Congregation of the Mission. He offered this explanation: “Firstly, I wanted to take our Savior as a model. He put things into practice before he made them part of his teaching.”⁴⁰ He was able to show that the Congregation could live up to them, because they had. “...I must say how pleased I am that you do live by them and that they have enabled you all to help one another.”⁴¹ This approach was counter-cultural in France, a country that favored theory to form practice rather the other way around. Several years after his death the French Revolution would result in multiple versions of the constitution, for instance, before the nation settled into a post-monarchical society.

Bill Marriott said it this way regarding his decision to acquire the Ritz Carlton hotel chain: “Research and analysis should give you the hard data you need to debate a decision

³⁸ Mark Pranaitis, C.M., “Wherever Your Treasure Lies There Also Your Heart Will Be,” *Vincentian Heritage* 19:1 (1998), 135.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴⁰ Document 117a, “Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission,” 17 May 1658, CCD, 13a:430.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 431.

with intelligence and insight, but facts alone aren't always enough to make a correct decision.... Which brings me to my third rule of decision making: listen to your heart."⁴²

It took Vincent a year to decide to accept the gift of the Priory of Saint-Lazare, a property on the outskirts of Paris with revenue attached, because it was too big (75 acres), too monastic, because it would change the nature of the Congregation. It had housed the mentally ill, prisoners, lepers, and monks. He was right, it was all those things. But it also improved and strengthened the Congregation and its work because it provided the capacity to grow and the opportunity for Vincent to develop his practice of active hospitality. It transformed Vincent, his people, and his work. He attributed it all to the Providence of God—and it was—in the sense that Vincent considered the offer for a year while gathering data and listening to his heart and his God.

Active Hospitality—Make it your entire task

Vincent was a man of action. Once he decided on a proper course, he demanded what we might call pro-active service. Pujo says of Vincent, "He believed in the virtue of action and he loved to use this succinct motto: *Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit* (Action is our entire task)"⁴³

Vincent set the tone for those visiting Saint-Lazare: all are very welcome. He mentored those who worked there to practice "active hospitality." He taught them not to wait and see what guests needed, but rather to actively seek them out, welcome them, and ask what they need. As an extension of hospitality Saint-Lazare provided over 600 rooms. Over 13,000 (500+ per year) priests were ordained at the priory, and more than 20,000 lay people participated in retreats there. Saint-Lazare became a hospitality center for all of France. Vincent organized fund raising and programs to deliver services at no-cost or reduced fees, and he paid for the retreats and training.⁴⁴ It all started at Châtillon, where he learned that, although there was great charity for serving the poor, it was not well structured. His response was to organize, to take action to change the world for the better.

Depaul International, now 25 years old, currently provides services to the homeless in six countries. The senior management group is designing strategies and best practices to welcome the homeless into their centers. They base these strategies in part on Vincent's words, cited earlier: "...let's devote ourselves with renewed love to serve persons who are poor, and even to seek out those who are the poorest and most abandoned; let's acknowledge before God that they're our lords and masters and that we're unworthy of rendering them our little services."⁴⁵

In practical terms this means redesigning waiting rooms into welcoming centers, replacing the clipboards and forms for the homeless to fill out with a cup of tea and

⁴² Marriott, *Without Reservations*, 127.

⁴³ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 251.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁵ Conference 164, CCD, 11:349.



Howard Schultz of Starbucks, Bill Marriott, Jr. of Marriott International, and Steve Jobs of Apple. Innovative business leaders of our era that have placed a premium on excellence in customer service.

Public Domain images



conversation, welcoming the poor as guests and very dear friends. Today hospitality experts like Bill Marriott, Jr., teach their associates to anticipate the guests' needs, to exceed their expectations. "True excellence includes taking care of the smallest details, even when they're not visible to your customers."⁴⁶ Vincent was a Marriott of charity before Bill Marriott had served a single meal.

Howard Schultz said of Starbucks, "We are what we are—but the question is, what are we going to do about it and how are we going to fix it?"⁴⁷ Vincent could delve into great detail on the means of carrying out their mission as seen in this lesson in basic nursing:

She will set up the tray on the bed, place on it a napkin, a cup, a spoon, and some bread, wash the patient's hands, and then say grace. She will pour the soup into a bowl, and put the meat on a plate. She will arrange everything on the bed tray, then kindly encourage the patient to eat for the love of Jesus and His holy Mother. She will do all this as lovingly as if she were serving her own son—or rather God, who considers as done to Himself the good she does for persons who are poor.⁴⁸

Acting on their culture of Vincentian hospitality and institutional values, DePaul University made conscious architectural decisions to plan the DePaul Center in Chicago's Loop to be open and inviting to the community. The university embodied its mission as urban and Vincentian by extending hospitality via building design, reducing boundaries to better serve students and welcome the public.

⁴⁶ Marriott, *Without Reservations*, 65.

⁴⁷ Howard Schultz, *Onward: How Starbucks Fought for its Life Without Losing its Soul* (New York: Rodale, 2011), 61.

⁴⁸ Document 126, "Charity of Women (Châtillon-les-Dombes)," November-December 1617, CCD, 13b:13.

Hospitality Lessons for Vincentian Leaders

1. Make sense: get our house in order. There is great charity but it is poorly organized. Organizing people is one of the greatest services leaders can offer—making connections between personal and organizational vision, values, and mission.
2. Focus on mission: great work is its own reward. Developing a personal mission and connecting it to the organizational mission is key to personal effectiveness. Modeling the way for others to help them make the same connection is inspirational.
3. Lead with passion: create a culture of values. Tell stories to teach and motivate. If we are, like Vincent, on fire for our cause of serving the poor, show it. Motivation comes from personal passion.
4. Make friends: nobody does it alone. Vincent worked hard and sometimes that work ethic overshadowed his genius of making friends, connections, and enabling the mission through others. He became friends with the best minds and spiritual luminaries of the time and used them as mentors.
5. Listen to the heart: Vincent was quick to teach others to depend on Divine Providence. He searched for the will of God in his personal life and organizational endeavors. He found his search for self in the search for God. He took twenty-seven years, but once he started listening to his heart he became himself.
6. Act. Make hospitality your entire task: something must be done; what should I do? Vincent was constantly seeking ways to improve service to the poor in all his organizations. He set action as the key component to his spirituality and service.

Do these leadership principles seem a little embarrassing, too much like motherhood and apple pie? If they are, then it is about right; we can be a little embarrassed to have passion, make friends with the poor, fuss over the details of service. Leaders are already “dancing naked on the table;” there is no use pretending they are wearing clothes.

Jenny Mohan, a graduate assistant in Vincent on Leadership: The Hay Project at DePaul University, described how service works for her:

It is through story telling that I convey my values, beliefs, morals and give insight into who I am as an individual. It is an opportunity for me to open myself and welcome others to be part of my life. Stories provide people with an avenue to understand each other and a way for us to relate to one another. St. Vincent de Paul used stories to communicate his mission, vision, and values. He took his life experiences and shared them as stories to teach others.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Jenny Mohan, “The Telling of Stories,” in Mohan and Sharp, *Leading in the Legacy*, 36.

Conclusion

“Once you share a common set of values, you can go and be yourself.”⁵⁰

Malcom Gladwell, in *Outliers*, offers the 10,000 hours rule: we have to devote 10,000 hours to master something. Vincent mastered service of the poor because he put in the hours. The Beatles became popular so quickly, so it seems, because they had put in so many hours perfecting their music, playing over 1,200 times in second-rate German clubs in less than two years. They burst forth on the world scene because they had already become so good together.⁵¹ John Lennon described it:

We got better and got more confidence. We couldn't help it with all the experience playing all night long. It was handy them being foreign. We had to try even harder, put our heart and soul into it, to get ourselves over.

In Liverpool, we'd only ever done one-hour sessions, and we just used to do our best numbers, the same ones, at every one. In Hamburg, we had to play for eight hours, so we really had to find a new way of playing.⁵²

Bill Gates is another example of someone who put in extraordinary hours as a child, performing real-time programming as an eighth-grader.⁵³ Both are important, the many hours along with great coaching or mentoring. What do Bill Marriott, Jr., Howard Schultz, Bill Gates, the Beatles, and Vincent have in common? All were motivated by a love of what they did, their passion and their vision. They also benefitted from the money earned, the for-profit factor. Except Vincent. His love for the poor was selfless. He gave his life savings to the poor to free himself for service. All were inspired by their missions, and all benefitted personally—except Vincent. His beneficiaries were the poor.

We can judge the effectiveness of Vincent's work not only by what he did during his lifetime, but more by the fact that it continued after his death without missing a step. Indeed, it expanded exponentially throughout the vast Vincentian Family, so that even more services for the poor continue growth today, over 350 years after his death. He changed France during his own lifetime; and he has changed Slovakia in our lifetime thanks to DePaul Slovakia.⁵⁴ Vincent built on a solid mission, created a formal organizational foundation and structures to enact that mission. His was a results-focused leadership.⁵⁵

Vincent achieved so much because he did so much. He wrote over 30,000 letters in his lifetime, using a technique of management by memo, and he sent his missionaries all

⁵⁰ Fuller, *You Can't Lead with Your Feet*, 37.

⁵¹ Gladwell, *Outliers*, 47-49.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁴ Post-Russian Slovakian government had to change its structures and regulations to allow Depaul Slovakia to open shelters for the homeless.

⁵⁵ See: Fuechtmann, “There is Great Charity,” 49-50.



Vincent de Paul sending out missionaries.

Stained glass window by Laurent and Gsel, Paris.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



over the world while remaining actively engaged in leading, managing, and mentoring. Proportionately, Vincent had as many failures and made as many mistakes as others. It is just that he did so much more than most. Thomas Fuechtmann writes:

Vincent's early biographers were impressed with his "prodigious activity."early writers were "unable to escape the magnetic field of Vincent's ceaseless energy. Vincent's activity continued to overshadow his interiority."⁵⁶

Vincent worked longer days than most, and lived more years than his contemporaries. He listened to his coaches and mentors, some of the best minds in Europe, his confreres, and he put in the hard work to formulate a charity of hospitality. Vincent, Bill Gates, and the Beatles all started their careers early in life. They logged their 10,000 hours, and they were welcomed on the world stage because they were in the right place at the right time, and because they were so well-practiced. Vincent's work continues growing all over our world nearly 400 years later.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.



Challamel d'après Jules David.

Fondation de l'hospice des Enfants trouvés.

Vincent de Paul and the foundling hospital.

From a series of engravings in Augustin Challamel, *Saint-Vincent de Paul* (1841).

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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Daughters of Charity caring for the sick. Engraving.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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Vincent presents the Common Rules to members of the Congregation of the Mission.

From a series on the life of Vincent de Paul by Vignola.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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Vincent de Paul holding a copy of the Common Rules.

Painting; original in the Vincentian motherhouse, Paris, France.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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Howard Schultz of Starbucks, Bill Marriott, Jr. of Marriott International, and Steve Jobs of Apple. Innovative business leaders of our era that have placed a premium on excellence in customer service.

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Vincent de Paul sending out missionaries.

Stained glass window by Laurent and Gsel, Paris.

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